

**NORTH BRUNSWICK TOWNSHIP |
MINUTES....**

**REGULAR MEETING
June 22, 2020**

A regular meeting of the North Brunswick Township Council was held on Monday, June 22, 2020 (**Via Go To Meeting**) at 7:15 p.m. in the Municipal Complex located at 710 Hermann Road, North Brunswick, Middlesex County, New Jersey.

Mayor Womack called the meeting to order.

Roll call:

Present (via telephonically) Ms. Cortes and Ms. Guadagnino, Messrs. Lopez, Davis, Socio and Andrews

Nays: None

Absent: None

Ms. Russo announced that the notice requirements of the law have been satisfied. Notices were sent by certified mail on January 2, 2020 to the following:

- a) The Home News Tribune b) Star Ledger c) North Brunswick Sentinel

Notice receipts are on file in the Municipal Clerk's Office. Also, notices were posted on the bulletin board in the Municipal Complex and filed in the Municipal Clerk's Office.

Also present (via Go To Meeting): Interim Business Administrator Justine Progebin, Township Attorney Ron Gordon, Esq., Director of Public Safety Kenneth McCormick, Deputy Chief Joseph Battaglia, Director of Parks, Recreation & Community Services Lou Ann Benson, Director of Community Development Michael Hritz, Chief Financial Officer Cavel Gallimore, Director Department Of Public Works Eric Chaszar, Tax Collector Laurie Hammarstrom, Confidential Secretary/Planning Board Sec. Janice Larkin, Municipal Clerk Lisa Russo and Clerk 1 Nellie Sowell.

Ms. Russo led the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance

Mayor Womack asked council members if any items are to be removed from the Consent Agenda.

Mayor Womack called for a motion to approve **items 4a – 4l** on the consent agenda. Motion made by Mr. Davis, second by Mr. Socio.

Consent Agenda

- a. 177a-6.20 Authorizing budget transfers for Fiscal Year 2020 Appropriations
- b. 178-6.20 Authorizing the renewal of a portion of the Township's \$35,230,750 Bond Anticipation Notes, Series 2019A, dated July 22, 2019, and authorizing Bond Anticipation Notes in the sum of \$11,200,000 authorized by five Bond Ordinances heretofore adopted to finance various Capital Improvements in, by and for the Township of North Brunswick, County of Middlesex, New Jersey, and providing for other details of said issue
- c. 179-6.20 Resolution combining Bonds aggregating the principal sum of \$18,955,000 authorized by eight Bond Ordinances heretofore adopted to finance part of the cost of various Capital Improvements in, by and for the Township of North

Brunswick, in the County of Middlesex, New Jersey into one consolidated issue of Bonds and providing for the form, maturities and other details of said consolidated issues

d. 180-6.20 Deferring additional School tax Liability - \$1,000,000

e. 181-6.20 Canceling \$200,000 Balance from Current Fund Appropriation

f. 182-6.20 Acceptance of the sale of Auctioned Abandoned Motor Vehicles

g. 183-6.20 Authorizing and confirming the appointment of Mark A. Ventola and Andrew Heuer to the position of Class II Special Law Enforcement Officer

h. 184-6.20 Authorizing and confirming the appointments of Class III Special Law Enforcement Officers

i. 185-6.20 Authorizing an amendment to Contract Bid 17009 with Municipal Maintenance Company for Maintenance and Repair of Township Lift Stations

j. 186-6.20 Water/sewer credit

k. 187-6.20 Authorizing the tax collector to process third quarter "estimated" Tax Bills, due August 1, 2020

l. 188-6.20 Bill List

Roll call:

Present (via telephonically) Ms. Cortes & Ms. Guadagnino, Messrs. Lopez, Davis Socio & Andrews

Nays: None

Abstain: None

Absent: None

Mayor Womack called for a motion to approve *item #5a* on the agenda **Minutes/ May 26, 2020/ Special Council Meeting** so moved by Mr. Davis and second by Mr. Socio.

Roll call:

Present (via telephonically) Ms. Cortes & Ms. Guadagnino, Messrs. Lopez, Davis Socio & Andrews

Nays: None

Abstain: None

Absent: None

Mayor Womack called for a motion to approve *item #5b* on the agenda **Minutes/ June 1, 2020/ Regular Council Meeting** so moved by Mr. Andrews and second by Mr. Davis.

Roll call:

Present (via telephonically) Ms. Cortes & Ms. Guadagnino, Messrs. Lopez, Davis Socio & Andrews

Nays: None

Abstain: None

Absent: None

Reports from Mayor, Council, Administrator, CFO

Councilwoman Cortes announced launching of new digital website. Councilwoman Cortes says to email her with any feedback. Council President Andrews comments on new website as well.

Mayor Womack presents PowerPoint presentation on water billing

Township attorney Ron Gordon advises residents on protocol for Public Hearing.

Mayor Womack opens Public Hearing at 7:41pm

Teresa Demelo – Starts by thanking Mayor and Council. She was asking when new bill will be revised? Ms. Demelo asks if bill is not corrected by next bill cycle (July 10) will a lien be placed on her home? Ms. Demelo asks where are we on the status of this? Mayor Womack and Justine Progebin respond

Al Volquez – Questions why she has a \$600 bill, resident Wendy Cromwell adds she lives in a condo and should not be charged for irrigation.

Township attorney Ron Gordon advises residents on protocol for public hearing again.

Al Volquez – asks how will this be addressed. The last bill she received was in November, asks why it is so much now? Ms. Volquez states she can not see any of her account online and how she can find website for account information. Ms. Progebin responds

Usama Khan – Says his bill states he has \$200 usage from March to June. Mr. Khan states he called the water company and they advised him to get a plumber to look into a possible leak. Mr. Khan states he did have a plumber come out to inspect and no leak was found. Mr. Khan states his bill is about 3 times higher than normal. Mr. Khan asks how he can have assistance on how to proceed with this? Mayor Womack and Ms. Progebin respond.

Carolann Jones – Starts by thanking Ron and his recognition of people waiting to speak. She says there is clearly a problem with the water bill. Is there a plan for an audit? Ms. Jones states she has never received a bill this high. What are the plans for this mistake? Ms. Jones advised Township to be prepared for a lot of calls regarding this matter. Ms. Jones hopes there is a dedicated team in place for this matter. Mayor Womack and Ms. Progebin respond.

Karen Kalamaris (Microsoft Account) - says she has been living in a townhome in North Brunswick for years and has always had low water usage. Ms. Kalamaris has always paid her bills on time. Ms. Kalamaris states Mayor and Council's water bills have not increased. Ms. Kalamaris wants a guarantee there will be no liens put on homes. Mayor Womack responds. Ms. Kalamaris wants a valid reason why the water bill is so high. Ms. Kalamaris states it is not her or any resident's responsibility and the Township needs to "step up and do their jobs". Ms. Kalamaris states she will start a law suit along with many of other residents. Ms. Kalamaris states many people paid their bill because they did not know there was a problem. Ms. Kalamaris states they will pay what they have always paid for the July 10 due date. Mayor Womack responds.

Maria Youseff – Says there is no logical answer why the water bills are so high, they have gone up significantly. Ms. Youseff says she has reached out to council members and said she has not received any follow up. Ms. Youseff says she had a new meter installed on February 4, 2020. She has not had any

abnormal usage but has noticed a lot of strange increase in water use during the day, for example a high usage at 3am when she is asleep. Ms. Youseff states the Township needs to offer some assurance to the residents. Ms. Youseff states she has issues with answers she has been given from the Township. She believes that if Township does not do anything about this, things will only get worse. The problems need to be resolved. Ms. Youseff questions old system and them not reading properly. Ms. Youseff states it is not the resident's responsibility for meters not running properly. Ms. Youseff states there are 650 people have complained and they can not all be wrong. (time is up) Mayor Womack allows Ms. Youseff to finish her statement. Ms. Youseff asks how can it be questioned when online shows high usage and how the rate is measured for billing per cubic foot? Answered by Mayor Womack and Ms. Progebin.

Carmelo Cintron – Feels there is too much wrong with the water bills. Mr. Cintron feels clueless on how to move forward. Mr. Cintron has issues with the meters. He states his bill cycle was shorter but the amount was 4 times more than normal. Mr. Cintron states the customer service is horrible, he tried calling several times and was given wrong extension, etc. What can be done to make things better? Mr. Cintron states this is bigger than just one case. He states the Township needs to keep contractors honest and he feels this responsibility should not fall back on the residents. Mr. Cintron asks how this will fall back on landlords if their tenants will not pay? Mayor Womack and Ms. Progebin respond

Thiru Ramanathan – States his situation is similar to others, still has old meter so he was not paying attention to this to much because he thought it only had to do with the new meters. He logged onto portal and noticed there was a 4 times increase. Mayor Womack responds.

Nicole Andrews (90 Goodwin) – States her normal bill is \$72 per month, her most recent bill is over \$1500. Ms. Andrews states she called to have someone come out to read meter but was advised no one could be there until after July 16. She asks what can be done when her bill is due for July 10? Ms. Andrews she has tried several things, including turning off the water completely, calling a plumber and has took pictures, she has no answers to what is going on. What does she do? Mayor Womack and Ms. Progebin respond

Tony Brown – Gives thanks to Mayor and Council. He has technical questions, he question's the towers, how they are read? Customer service behind roll out? Mr. Brown has a concern regarding call in volume tomorrow and states busy signals will only anger residents more. Mayor Womack and Ms. Progebin respond.

Ameet (Meadows at Renaissance) – States he has new meter, his bill has gone from \$80 to \$360 (3 to 4 times higher) Wants to know where he can go for assistance? Is there a common email to send messages to so questions can be answered? Mayor Womack and Ms. Progebin respond.

Vijesh Karatt Vellatt – Says there was a rental property and no one was there but that address received a high bill. He states some of his neighbors have issues and others don't. Mayor Womack responds.

Lisa Earl – Says she has same issues with the bills, her bill is much higher than it should be. Ms. Earl questions how to schedule appointment with In-Line and will Township be responsible for costs to move things associated with new water installation? Ms. Earl states on top on high water bill now they have to pay more, she does not feel its fair. Mayor Womack and Ms. Progebin respond.

David Marchman – States has not had any problems with the water but feels frustrated for his neighbors. Mr. Marchman states with everything going on Township should help residents in some way. Can residents receive some type of credit to assist them? Mayor Womack responds.

Orville Cameron – Questions why bill is so much higher? Mr. Cameron wants to be on record she paid a bill on January 4, 2020 bill and another bill was received the next month and he thought it was strange. He questioned it and was told it was an upgrade. Mr. Cameron says the usage is unreasonable to pay for only 2 people. He had people out to check for a leak and was told there was none. He paid bill for fear of going to court. Mayor Womack responds.

Constance Hambel (Deer Brook) – She claims seniors have received higher bills and the Deer Brook office will not take their lot fees if the water bill is not paid for. Ms. Hambler states her bill is the opposite from what people are saying, her bill is normally \$80 but the last bill received was \$8. Mayor Womack responds.

Maryann Stanly – asks what happens if you can not afford payments? What to do? Mayor Womack responds.

Ashley Lounder – She feels the same as the other residents. Ms. Lounder states her water bill has increased 2 times, she doesn't mind paying her normal amount but she does not feel she should pay full amount because she wants to buy a house. Ms. Lounder says she will pay her normal amount and leave the balance for her landlord. What is the timeline for a resolution to this? Mayor Womack responds. Ms. Lounder tried to give her account #, Township attorney Ron Gordon advised her to not give that information out on the live meeting, she said it was he landlord's information, again Mr. Gordon advises her not to disclose that information at this time.

Sharnita Chilukuri – says she received her 6 month bill in the December for \$1900, she was told there was a leak. Ms. Chilukuri was given options, previous house maybe had balance? Maybe too much usage? She is unsure of whats going on. She said her bill now is \$200 every 2 months, she wants answers. Mayor Womack responds.

Councilwoman Guadagnino addressed the residents regarding the water/sewer.

Maria Youseff – gives thanks to Mayor and Council and says she respects Councilwoman Guadagnino but disagrees with most of what she had said. Ms. Youseff says this is a large scale problem. She questions how new billing is going to run? Will there be a meeting again in 2 weeks for a status update? Mayor Womack and Ms. Progebin respond

Karen Kalamaris (Microsoft Account) – States she was angry from what Councilwoman Guadagnino said but she has calmed down. Ms. Kalamaris states Councilwoman Guadagnino is wrong and this is not due to COVID 19. Ms. Kalamaris states Councilwoman Guadagnino has a normal bill, no increase on it.

David Marchman – Appreciates all the work that went into this project but he believes there are still a lot of problems. He claims a solution needs to be found. Thank to the Mayor and Council.

Melissa – states her husband is unemployed since March. They used to have a water bill for \$275 but now the water bill is almost up to \$1000. She asked if there are any programs for assistance. Mayor Womack responds.

Matt Levine – Gives thanks to Mayor and his panel. Mr. Levine states they have done an outstanding job with COVID 19. Mr. Levine states he has been seeing what is being posted on Facebook and he is upset with the “lynching” that seems to be going on..Mr. Levine thinks its great to have a meeting regarding the water issues. He gives thanks to panel, who he considers to be volunteers. Mr. Levine thinks its petty that people are doing this. Mr. Levine states his water bill is fine and his tenants water bill is fine as well.

Mayor Womack called for a motion to close the Public Hearing at 10:05 7PM, so moved by Council President Andrews second by Ms. Cortes.

Roll call:

Present (via telephonically) Ms. Cortes & Ms. Guadagnino, Messrs. Lopez, Davis Socio & Andrews
Nays: None
Abstain: None
Absent: None

Mayor Womack called for a motion to adjourn meeting, so moved by Mr. Davis, second by Council President Andrews.

Roll call:

Present (via telephonically) Ms. Cortes & Ms. Guadagnino, Messrs. Lopez, Davis Socio & Andrews
Nays: None
Abstain: None
Absent: None

Adjourn 10:06 pm

Lisa Russo
Municipal Clerk

NOTICE OF COUNCIL WORKSHOP/MEETING TO BE HELD
ONLINE FOR THE TOWNSHIP OF NORTH BRUNSWICK

This notice is made and given in compliance with the provisions of the Sunshine Law, N.J.S.A. 10:4-6, et seq., (the Open Public Meetings Act) which provides that public meetings may be held in person or by means of communication equipment, N.J.S.A. 10:4-8(b), to include streaming services and other online meeting platforms.

Please take notice that a Council Workshop with a Public Meeting to follow has been scheduled for Monday, June 22, 2020 at 7:00 p.m. will be held on by communication device and/or the online meeting platform "GoToMeeting". The meeting will be hosted and broadcast from the North Brunswick Municipal Complex, 710 Hermann Road, North Brunswick, New Jersey. As a result of the COVID-19 crisis, the meeting will be conducted entirely via communication equipment and/or the GoToMeeting meeting platform. Members of the public wishing to participate and be heard at the meeting should be use the following links:

From a computer, tablet or smartphone:

<https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/410841173>

New to GoToMeeting? Get the app now and be ready when your first meeting starts: <https://global.gotomeeting.com/install/410841173>

By telephone:

United States: +1 (646) 749-3122

- One-touch: tel: +16467493122, 410841173#